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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 001698

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, S/CT, DS

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TAGS: [PREL](#), [PTER](#), [PHUM](#), [BA](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES COUNTER-TERRORISM, IRAQ,
HUMAN RIGHTS WITH PRIME MINISTER

Classified by Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

Summary

11. (S) The Ambassador met with Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa November 8 for a discussion that included counter-terrorism, Iraq, and human rights. He expressed the USG's deep concern about the judge's release of the four terrorism suspects on November 1 and urged the GOB to use all legal means available to prosecute them. The PM replied that he would not allow anything to harm U.S. interests in the Kingdom and noted that the suspects are under surveillance. He said that Iraqi President Yawar was staying in Bahrain for an extended period in order to spend time with his family, which is visiting from Saudi Arabia, and this provided a good opportunity for the Bahrain leadership to get to know him. The Ambassador raised the closure of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and suggested that allowing the Center to re-open would send a strong signal on openness in Bahrain. The PM replied that while Bahrain is an open society, some people try to abuse this to cause divisions. He said that Bahrain is committed to the rule of law and a free society and there is no going back. End Summary.

U.S. Concern About Release of Terror Suspects

12. (S) The Ambassador called on Prime Minister Khalifa November 8 and discussed a range of issues, including counter-terrorism, Iraq, and human rights. Noting that the Deputy Secretary had met with King Hamad the evening before, the Ambassador stated that the United States is deeply concerned about the outcome of the court case for the four terrorism suspects. We regard them as being very dangerous. The Ambassador urged the GOB to use all legal means available to prosecute them energetically and to keep them off the street as long as possible. Their November 1 release by the judge sends the wrong signal about Bahrain's commitment to fighting terrorism.

13. (S) The Prime Minister replied that Bahrain will work very hard to ensure that nothing harms U.S. interests in the Kingdom. The four suspects are under surveillance and can be brought in and questioned at any time. He would not let the suspects move without being monitored. The PM said, "your security is our security," and he would not let anything endanger Bahrain's security and stability.

Getting To Know Yawar

14. (C) The PM stated that Iraqi President Yawar was staying in Bahrain for an extended period, visiting with his family which lives in Saudi Arabia and is now also here. Yawar planned to return to Iraq before the Eid Al Fitr holiday, expected to begin on November 14. The PM said Bahrain appreciated Yawar's visit as it allowed the country's leadership to get to know him better. He said that Bahrain was ready to support Iraq in any way it could, noting the current program to train up to 4,000 Iraqi firefighters.

Re-open Human Rights Center?

15. (C) The Ambassador explained that while the United States was appreciative of Bahrain's progress on reform, many people had noticed certain recent moves such as the GOB's decision to close and dissolve the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), and wondered what it meant. Did the move signal a change in direction for Bahrain? We understand that the issue is complex, but we are looking for confirmation that Bahrain will continue to move in a positive direction. The BCHR may have done some things that the GOB considers mistakes, but permitting the Center to re-open would send a strong signal about Bahrain's openness.

16. (C) The PM stated that Bahrain is an example of openness

and reform in the Gulf. However, some people try to abuse this openness. Democracy is not the freedom to divide people and disregard laws. When citizens follow the law and respect order, there are no problems. The Ambassador pointed out that there are those in any society who push the envelope and may even go too far. But this should not bring about an overreaction.

Bahrainis United Under Constitution and Law

17. (C) The Prime Minister said that anyone could see that the human rights situation in Bahrain was good. Bahrain is the deputy chair of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva and there are human rights organizations in Bahrain other than the BCHR. However, there are those who use human rights as cover for other activities, and the GOB must show that it is not fooled by them. Bahrain is committed to rule of law and a free society, and there is no going back. Bahrain's citizens are united under the constitution and the law. There will be municipal elections in 2005, and the government wants the people to participate in the elections and it looks forward to working with the election winners.

MONROE